

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT

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>KUWAIT>JENNINGS: Good evening. It is a question which yet has >HIJACKING>to be answered. Will the United States strike back at terrorists who take or threaten American lives? We have now learned some new information on how that hijacking to Iran came to an end last week and we have also learned the administrator is now in more of a mind to strike back. Here's ABC's senior correspondent, John Scali.

SCALI: Powerful support is building up within the Reagan administration for swift retaliation against terrorist bases in Iran the next time pro-Iranian terrorists strike against Americans. The first sign of this tough new position, championed by Secretary of State Shultz, became known as the Tehran airport hostage crisis ended with an unprecedented number of U.S. military men, warships and planes deployed for action in strategic areas of the Middle East. ABC News has learned that these units included special commando detachments, survey teams and other experts secretly rushed from the U.S. and positioned in five separate locations in the region. Their possible mission was to rescue the hostages aboard the plane, but only if the terrorists flew into an airport in another country, such as Libya or South Yemen. At no point, apparently, was any consideration given to trying the rescue at Tehran itself, because of the fear that hostages and rescuers alike would have been wiped out. The mobilization of all this U.S. military power, reinforced by urgent warnings by the governments of Syria, Pakistan, Algeria and others, relayed at U.S. request, are believed to have played a major role in Iran's decision to end the hostage crisis. At present, Reagan administration leaders have ruled out any retaliation against Iran for this incident because, while there is deep suspicion, there is not enough hard evidence that the terrorists were acting as agents of the Iranian government. In the wake of the newest crisis, U.S. intelligence is warning that Iranian-based terrorists are planning new strikes against U.S. installations in Western Europe. If this happens, a sizable majority of top officials are now reported ready to recommend that the U.S. reply by direct military attacks against four terrorist training bases in northeast Iran. Everyone recognizes that this could provoke an Iranian counterattack, but advocates say it's an unavoidable risk if American warnings are to be regarded as credible. John Scali, ABC News, Washington. <